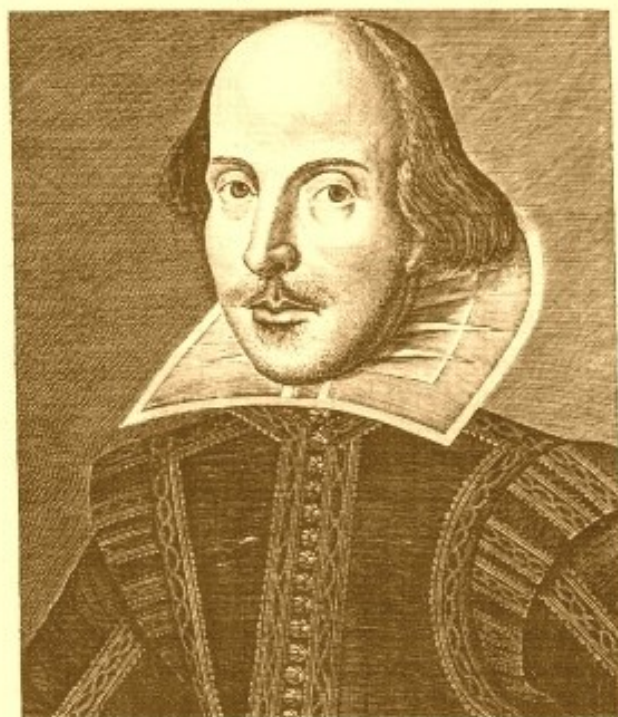


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to Modern English - for contemporary
readers and performers

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Shakespeare For White Trash: Love's Labour's Lost

Classic literature translated into Modern English by Crad Kilodney

October 7, 2010 – Author's Note:

“Shakespeare For White Trash” is a series of condensed rewrites designed to make Shakespeare understandable and enjoyable to those who have little or no knowledge of him. The plots and characters are unchanged, but everything else has been radically restyled. Read my versions and you’ll be a Shakespeare fan forever!

These plays are intended to be performed, as well as read.

Main Characters

Ferdinand, King of Navarre

Biron, Longueville, and Dumaine — lords attending on the King (Alternate spellings are Berowne and Longaville.)

Princess of France (Name not given)

Rosaline, Maria, and Katherine — ladies attending on the Princess

Boyet — lord attending on the Princess

Don Adriano de Armado — Spanish gentleman

Moth — Armado’s page

Costard — a country bumpkin (“Costard” is a humorous archaic word for “head.”)

Jaquenetta — a country girl

Dull — a constable

Nathaniel — a curate

Holofernes — a schoolmaster

Forester

Marcade — French messenger

Gist of the story: The King of Navarre decides to turn his court into an academy of learning and persuades three lords — Biron, Longueville, and Dumaine — to join him. They sign an oath promising to give up women for three years and devote themselves to studying books. Their good intentions are soon forgotten, however, when the Princess of France arrives on diplomatic business with three of her ladies. The King falls in love with the Princess, Biron falls in love with Rosaline, Longueville falls in love with Maria, and Dumaine falls in love with Katherine. Meanwhile, Don Armado, who was to have joined the King's court, falls in love with Jaquenetta, who is the girlfriend of Costard. The King and his three lords attempt to woo the ladies with love poems, letters, and gifts, then by disguising themselves as Russians, and finally by entertaining them with an absurd pageant. The Princess and her ladies are not to be swayed, however. A messenger brings news that the King of France has died, so the Princess and her ladies must depart. But they set conditions for the men to meet if they seriously want to marry them.

(Unlike Shakespeare's other plays, there is not much of a story line here. The play is mainly a showcase of clever speeches, jokes, and word-play. And nobody gets married at the end, which is unlike the other comedies. The ending is rather weak, with two characters singing songs of spring and winter, representing the carefree single life and the comforts of married life. Shakespeare's ending may be a revision, but we'll never know what he originally wrote. I've tweaked the ending to make it work better. Like many of his plays, the origins of *Love's Labour's Lost* are somewhat shrouded in mystery. The title itself is a bit of a poser. Is the second apostrophe a possessive or a contraction? If it is a contraction, the title means "Love's labour is lost." If it is a possessive, it means "Those lost in (or by) the labour of love." The earliest surviving text, the Quarto version of 1598, is no help, as it has no apostrophes at all! So my own theory is that Shakespeare deliberately pitched us a title that would be ambiguous. And that would be entirely in keeping with the spirit of the play. *Love's Labour's Lost* was disliked by critics of the time and was out of favour for more than two centuries. It has since found an appreciative audience. And this is the BEST and FUNNIEST restyling of the play ever published — guaranteed! And if any director out there is brave enough to fill a theatre with white trash and present my version, a lot of people who never read a book in their lives will become instant Shakespeare fans.)

Act 1, Scene 1. (*Author's note: The setting of this play is the former kingdom of Navarre, in northern Spain and southwestern France. Everything happens in or near the park. The stage will be pretty bare most of the time.*) *Coming in are Ferdinand, the youthful King of Navarre, and three of his Lords — Biron, Longueville, and Dumaine.*

King: When we think of ancient Greece, what do we think of first? The philosophers. Socrates. Plato. Aristotle. They had their own academy, and they devoted themselves to deep philosophical questions. And that's sort of what I want to do here in Navarre, now that I'm King. I want Navarre to be known as a place of scholarship. Deep thinking. Studying. And you fellows will be part of it. Together we'll make my court a great academy.

Lords: Yes, yes.

King: But it'll be a war—a war between the mind and the natural instincts of the body. Desire. That sort of thing.

Lords: Yes, yes.

King: You must be tough. You must be brave.

Lords: Yes, yes.

King: I've written it all down. *(He takes out a paper.)* This is our oath. The three of you—Biron, Longueville, and Dumaine—my fellow scholars—and my favourite lords, of course—agree to live here in my court for three years and devote yourselves to serious intellectual study—and to do without the, uh, you know, company of women, partying, luxuries—that sort of thing. All the rules are written down. Just sign the oath, and we're all in this together for the next three years.—Here, Longueville. You can sign first. *(He gives Longueville the paper.)* Right below my signature.

Longueville: Okay, my lord. Three years isn't too long.

(Longueville signs.)

King: Very good.—Dumaine, you sign.

(Dumaine takes the paper.)

Dumaine: Fine. I'll be a serious philosopher for three years. Forget about worldly pleasures. Great idea.

(Dumaine signs.)

King: Excellent.—Biron?

(He presents the paper to Biron.)

Biron: Okay, okay. Just let me look at it, my lord. I already agreed verbally to this idea yesterday, but there were some rules you talked about that I'm not entirely sure of.

King: Like what?

Biron: Like not even seeing a woman for three years. And fasting one day a week and only eating one meal on the other days. And sleeping only three hours a night. You were just talking, right? You didn't actually put that in here.

King: It's all in there.

Biron: Well—my lord—I don't know if I'm prepared to go that far.

Longueville: Come on, Biron, you agreed.

Biron: Well, I may have said I would agree, but I didn't actually, like, agree. I didn't perform any act of agreement. It was just a few words out of my mouth, right?

King: Ah—you see? That's what a philosopher would say. You're a born philosopher, man!

Biron: My lord, if I may ask, what is the end purpose of all this studying we're going to do?

King: The purpose is to learn those things we would not otherwise know.

Biron: You mean things that we couldn't just learn by our own senses, living day by day.

King: Exactly. Our quest is for hidden knowledge. Secret knowledge.

Biron: Oh, I'm all for secret knowledge—like who serves the best roast beef in town, or how to pick up babes—or even how to get around an oath without actually breaking it.

King: We're forgetting all about physical pleasures and desires. This is about study. Books. Enlightenment. What is the middle of the word 'enlightenment'? 'Light.'

Biron: It's not exactly in the middle. It's closer to the front.

King: That's okay. Just think of light—brilliant, radiant, overwhelming.

Biron: That much light would blind a man, and then he'd be in darkness. So what's the good of all that reading?

King (To the other Lords): Now there's an interesting point of logic. Don't you agree?

Dumaine: I think he just wants to back out.

King (To Biron): Is that it? You're backing out?

Biron: Well, I'm not saying that. It's just that, well, you know, it's okay to want to study books and find knowledge, but what's the point of creating these strange rules and imposing them on yourself—and us?

(The King takes back the paper.)

King: Fine. You don't want to sign? Don't sign. You're obviously not equal to the challenge.

Biron: Oh, wait, wait, wait. Just give me a chance to read what I'm signing.

(The King gives Biron the paper. Biron scans it, reading aloud occasionally.)

Biron: Mm—mm—"I shall keep a mile away from any woman."

King: Yes. Longueville thought of that.

Biron (To Longueville): Did you now?

Longueville: Yes. The King wanted a kilometer, but I said a mile, just to be safe.

Biron (Shaking his head): I don't know.—What else?—"If any man is seen talking to a woman during the term of three years, he shall be publicly humiliated in a manner to be decided by the rest of the court."

King: Precisely.

Biron: I foresee a problem with this, my lord.

King: What's the problem?

Biron: Have you forgotten that the French king's daughter is coming here on diplomatic business?

King: Oh.—She is, isn't she?

Longueville and Dumaine: Yes, my lord.

King: I totally forgot. Why didn't you remind me?

Longueville: I guess we forgot, too.

King: Well, it's all right. We'll make an exception for her—on mere necessity.

Biron: On mere necessity—ah! Okay. So if we can make exceptions on mere necessity, we're not breaking the oath, are we?

King: Right.

Biron: Good. Now I feel better. I'll sign.

(He signs the oath and returns it to the King.)

King: Good. We're all on board.

Biron: So what are we supposed to do for amusement for the next three years?

King: I've thought of that. I've invited a Spanish gentleman named Don Armado to spend time with us. He's living here in Navarre now. He's got tons of great stories. The heroic knights of Spain and all that. And his own heroic adventures.

Biron: Ah. Good.

King: He's very enthusiastic about the academy idea. He may even join us. Anyway, he'll be around to amuse us.

Biron: Good. Even if his stories are all lies, I won't mind.

Longueville: And we also have Costard to amuse us.

Biron: Costard? That country burmpkin?

Longueville: Yes.

Biron: Well! In that case the next three years should be loads of fun.

(Constable Dull comes in with Costard. Dull is holding a letter.)

Dull: I seek the Duke's own person.

Biron: The Duke is his own person—but he's the King now.

Dull: That's all right. Either one will do.

King: Force of habit—ha, ha.

Biron: The Duke is now the King, understand? Now, who are you?

Dull: I am the petty constable of the King of Navarre, and in this capacity I reprehend him.

(Looks of bewilderment.)

King: All right, then. What's your business, constable?

Dull: My lord, Senor Arm—uh, Ad—

King: Armado?

Dull: Yes. Senor Armado commends you and says there is villainy afoot. He sends you this letter.

(Dull hands the King the letter.)

King: Ah! A letter from the illustrious story-teller.

Biron: This better be good.

Costard: I'd like to explain, my lord. The letter is about me and Jaquenetta. You see, I was rather taken by the girl—or taken with her, I'm not sure which. And it was mutual. Now, it's true I was seen with her. After all, I was with her, and vice-versa. And I was speaking to her in my own manner, and as manners go, I think mine are pretty normal.

King: Perhaps I should just read the letter.

Biron (To the audience): 'The Sordid Affair of Costard and Jaquenetta'—by—*(To the King)* What's his full name?

King: Don Adriano de Armado.

Biron (To the audience): By Don Adriano de Armado.

King (Reading): "Great divine deputy and all-powerful ruler of Navarre, object of my devotion, and my soul's joy—"

Biron: I'll bet he's asking for a loan.

Costard: No, sir. It's about me. You'll see.

King: Just let me read this.—"So it was that, being in a condition of deep melancholy, an occasional change of mood by which great men are sometimes afflicted, I sought to expunge my ill humour by means of the wholesome air of your magnificent and intricate hedge-park, and repaired thence to stroll—"

Biron (To the audience): He didn't feel so good, so he went for a walk in the park.

King (Reading): "It was about six o'clock, a time when cows are grazing, birds are pecking, and good men sit down to their well-deserved supper—"

Biron (To the audience): Cows graze at six o'clock? I didn't know that.

King (Reading): “And so it was, and still is in point of fact, that I espied a most obscene scene—”

Biron (To the audience): An obscene scene. Take note.

King (Reading): “Which prompted me—later, of course—to take pen in hand and report with ink and paper what I am now compelled to report—”

Biron (To the audience): Finally.

Costard: It’s about me.

Biron: Don’t interrupt. This is art.

King (Reading): “The location was precisely north-northeast and by east from the west corner of the hedge-park. And there did I see that low-minded hillbilly doofus, that detestable minnow—”

Costard: What?

King (Reading): “That illiterate, mindless cretin—”

Costard: What?—Hey, that can’t be me.

Biron: Too late. You already stepped in it.

King: Quiet. I’m reading a masterpiece.—“Who, as I recall goes by the name of Costard—”

Costard: Ah. So it is me. I told you it was about me.

King (Reading): “Who consorted in a very vile manner, contrary to your wisest laws and moral sanctions, with a person I choose to refer to as—”

Costard: A wench. She’s just a wench. She’s normal.

King (Reading): “A descendant of Eve, or as it were, a female, or more commonly a woman. And being pricked by my sense of duty to your Majesty, I have sent this miscreant to you for punishment under the escort of your Majesty’s officer, Anthony Dull—”

Dull: That’s me. Anthony Dull.

King (Reading): “A man of good repute, bearing, and estimation. As for the female, whose name is Jaquenetta, I am keeping her here in detention until, by your determination, she shall go to trial and face the full fury of your laws. Yours truly, in all-consuming devotion, Don Adriano de Armado.”

Biron (To the audience): And you thought the fine art of letter-writing was dead, didn’t you?

King (To Costard): Well, what do you have to say about this?

Costard: I was with the wench, sir. I don’t deny it.

King: Don’t you know the law?

Costard: Yes, my lord, I know it. I just don’t pay any attention to it.

King: You could get a year in prison for being caught with a wench.

Costard: A year?—Oh, sir, now that I think of it, she wasn't really a wench. She was a damsel.

King: The law includes damsels.

Costard: How about virgins?

King: The law includes virgins.

Costard: Well, she's no virgin. I can tell you that, sir.

King: Then what would you call her?

Costard: A maid.

King: That won't do you any good.

Costard: That maid would do me a lot of good, sir.

King: Well, based on the facts, Costard, I find you guilty. Your sentence shall be—*(He pauses, exchanging a look of uncertainty with the Lords.)*—Your sentence is that you shall fast for one week on bran and water.

Costard: I would gladly do a month on mutton and pudding, sir.

King: I will let Don Armado take custody of you.—Biron, you can take him back to Armado.—Longueville—Dumaine—let's get started on our studies. We are now the Academy of Navarre.

(The King, Longueville, and Dumaine leave.)

Biron: Morality laws—oaths—they're all like tissue paper. What's the point?—Costard, I'd be on your side if you weren't socially my inferior.

Costard: Oh, pity me, sir. I am crushed by the weight of the law, just because I took a liking to Jaquenetta, and she to me. Now wherever I go, sorrow and misery will be my only companions, attached to me like a ball and chain—as it were.

Biron: A real victim of oppression, aren't you?

Costard: Yes, sir.

Biron: I know plenty of guys who would gladly do a week on bran and water to get laid. You did get laid, didn't you?

Costard: Almost, but not quite, sir.

Biron: Then I do pity you.

Costard: Thank you, sir.

Biron: Come on.

(Biron escorts Costard out.)

Act 1, Scene 2. *Armado and Moth come in.*

Armado: Moth.

Moth: Yes, boss?

Armado: Have you noticed how downcast I've been lately?

Moth: Yes, I have noticed.

Armado: And what do you think that means?

Moth: It means that you're sad, sir.

Armado: In other words, downcast.

Moth: No, just sad.

Armado: Aren't they the same thing?

Moth: No, sir. You haven't been cast down, as I can plainly see you standing up. But I can tell by your mien that you are sad.

Armado: My mien? You mean my countenance.

Moth: You may countenance whatever you wish, sir. You're the boss. However, when I say mien, I mean mien.

(Armado pauses, giving Moth an ambiguous look.)

Armado: You're rather clever for a short guy, aren't you?

Moth: It's all relative, sir. One would equally have to suppose that there are those who are rather stupid for being tall guys.

Armado: Was I smart to hire you as a page?

Moth: Of course, sir.

Armado: Why—specifically?

Moth: With most pages you just get one page. With me you get a whole book.

(Armado shares a twisted smile with the audience.)

Armado: Very well, my book-like page. Can you guess why I am lately so sad in my mien?

Moth: Being as close to you as I am, sir, and ruling out all other possibilities, I must conclude it's got something to do with a woman.

Armado: You are astute.

Moth: Thank you, sir. The world needs more stutes.

Armado: The problem for me is that I've agreed to study for three years with the Duke.

Moth: He's the King now, actually.

Armado: Yes, yes. I keep thinking of him as the Duke of Navarre. I like dukes better than kings for some reason. For instance, the Duke of Sherbourne. Ever hear of him?

Moth: Oh, yes! But let's not go there—at least not here.

Armado: All right. But getting back to my situation, all those who agree to join the Duke of Navarre in his intellectual enterprise are expected to study deep things.

Moth: How deep?

Armado: As deep as possible.

Moth: You want to be careful, sir. Men have fallen into deep places and have never been seen again.

Armado: How true.—And I've already fallen—in love, that is.

Moth: Oh. Too bad, sir. Unless, of course, she's a lady of high rank. Then it's okay.

Armado: She has no rank. She's just a country girl—a wench.

Moth (To the audience): That's a good word—wench. You never hear it any more. We should bring it back.

Armado: She's not a slut. Don't get that idea.

Moth (To the audience): Not a slut. A wench is not a slut.

Armado: She's just an ordinary rustic girl.

Moth: Right. I get it. *(To the audience)* Wenches are rustics. They live in the country. The sluts are all in the cities—where they have more opportunities.

Armado: I'm a gentleman. That makes it worse. I'm falling in love below my social class.

Moth: It happens, sir. But then, it's your life and you can do what you want.

Armado: But the Duke has made a rule that those who join him in his academy can't have any contact with women for three years.

Moth: Rules get broken all the time, sir. You just have to be clever about it.

Armado: My love is—what's the word?—immaculate.

Moth: No, it's not.

Armado: It's not?

Moth: Not if you're normal. And who is the girl in question, sir? *(Aside to the audience)* As if I couldn't guess.

Armado: She's the girl I saw in the park making out with that stupid yokel Costard.

Moth: Ah. It's Jaquenetta.

Armado: Yes. Jaquenetta. She could do a lot better than Costard, but she doesn't realize it. She could have me.

Moth: A man of rank.

Armado: Yes.

Moth: Not high rank. Just a regular gentleman.

Armado: Pity me, Moth. My situation is hopeless.

Moth: Okay, boss, I pity you. On the other hand, if she's that good in bed—

Armado: Stop it!

Moth: Okay, boss.

(Costard, Dull, and Jaquenetta come in.)

Dull: My lord, the Duke's instructions are that you take custody of this man Costard. He is to have nothing but bran and water for a week. As for the girl, I'll be keeping her in the park, although she's allowed to work in the daytime as a dairy maid.

Armado: That's a very good idea. *(To Jaquenetta)* Em, I will visit you at the lodge now and then—just to see how you're doing.

Jaquenetta: That's close by. Then you won't be far away from me, will you?

Armado: No—ha, ha—I won't, will I? *(Aside)* This girl makes me so hot. *(To Jaquenetta)* We have things to discuss, actually.

Jaquenetta: Do we now? Imagine!

(Armado draws her to him and whispers.)

Armado: I love you.

Jaquenetta: Oh, go on.

Armado (Normal voice): Now you just go with the constable, and everything will be all right.

Jaquenetta: Good day to you, sir.

Dull: Come on, miss.

(Dull escorts Jaquenetta out.)

Armado (To Costard): You villain, you'll have to fast for a week for your sinful ways.

Costard: If I can start on a full stomach, I won't mind so much.

Armado (To Moth): Take him away and lock him up.

Moth: Come on, you slave.

Costard: If I must fast, at least let me loose.

Moth: Ah! You wish to be fast and loose, is that it? Well, there'll be none of that, you criminal.

Costard: Then I will—I will be exceedingly silent—as an act of protest. See how you like having a silent prisoner. Silence can be deafening.

Moth: We won't listen to a word you don't say. I advise you to be patient.

Costard: I have as little patience as the next man, for which I thank God.

Moth: Come on.

(Moth takes Costard out.)

Armado: That girl—I want to lick every inch of her body. *(Looking up)* Cupid, you son-of-a-bitch! Next thing, you'll be making me write love songs!

(He leaves.)

Act 2, Scene 1. *The Princess of France comes in with her three waiting-ladies — Rosaline, Maria, and Katherine—and three attending Lords, of whom only Boyet is named.*

Boyet: Now, madam, you must use all your wits for the mission at hand. And don't be shy about using your feminine charms to best advantage.

Princess: Boyet, I'm above that sort of thing. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but my intelligence is entirely my own. Now, I have a task for you. I'm given to understand that the Duke of Navarre—I mean the King of Navarre—has closed off his court to women so he and his favourite lords can study like monks for three years—or something equally stupid. I don't wish to barge in if I'm not wanted, so you go first and tell him that the Princess of France is here on diplomatic business and requests a conference. We'll wait here in the park to know his pleasure..

Boyet: Your faithful servant always, madam.

(Boyet goes out.)

Princess (To the other Lords): Imagine—turning a court into a sort of academy for ascetics and not allowing women in.

First Lord: It's pretty strange, madam.

Second Lord: I say it's un-Christian.

Princess: Maybe the King really is that serious. I don't know him. Who are the other lords in his court? Do you know?

First Lord: One of them is Longueville.

Maria: I know him, madam—just slightly. He's quite handsome and intelligent. If he has one flaw, I'd say it was his cruel wit.

Princess: I know the type. They usually end up in their old age with senile dementia. Who else is there?

Katherine: Dumaine is another one. He's a nice enough fellow, I'd say. What he lacks in wit, he makes up for in looks—and vice-versa.

Princess: Now there's a unique description.

Rosaline: The most interesting one is Biron. He's very charming, very funny. But he is a mocker—far worse than Longueville.

Princess: Well! My ladies are very well-informed. Perhaps you're looking for husbands.

Ladies (Laughing): No! No!

(Boyet returns.)

Princess: So what does Navarre have to say, Boyet?

Boyet: The Duke—em, King—and his three lords are looking forward to greeting you, madam.—However, owing to the rules that they are imposing on themselves, the King intends to lodge you out here.

Princess: Out here? In the park?

Boyet: Em—yes.

(The King, Longueville, Dumaine, and Biron come in.)

King: Princess, welcome to my court.

Princess: Is this your court? I don't see any roof.

King: Ha, ha. You're welcome anyway, roof or no roof.

Princess: So. The Princess of France and her party—on a diplomatic mission—are to be camped out of doors.

King: I'm sorry, madam. It's just that my lords and I have sworn an oath. Nothing to do with you personally.

Princess: Is it true you're not allowing any women into your court for three years so you can study books?

King: Something like that, yes. We want to follow strict rules, the way they do in a monastery. Actually, we're making a big exception just to come out and greet you like this.

Princess: I see.—I'm not quite sure what to make of this.—At any rate, I have a letter from my father, the King of France. Perhaps you would just like to settle this here and now, in which case my ladies and I won't even bother to unpack.

(She gives the King a letter. He reads it silently.)

Biron (To Rosaline): Didn't I dance with you in Brabant once?

Rosaline: If you did, you'd remember.

Biron: I'm sure I did.

Rosaline: Then you needn't have asked.

Biron: Oh!—Well, sorry.

King (To the Princess): I'm not quite following this. Your father refers to a payment of a hundred thousand crowns—which is half of what he owed my father for his help in the wars.—And he says instead of repaying the other half, we can keep half of Aquitaine, which was pledged to secure the loan.

Princess: That's right.

King: I don't know anything about the payment of a hundred thousand crowns. I don't want Aquitaine. No offense to you or Aquitaine. It's a nice territory. But I'd rather have the money.

Princess: But as far as we're concerned, the debt is settled. Perhaps your father didn't keep you informed about the matter.

King: That's possible. But if there was a repayment, you must have a receipt, or something. Have you got any documentation?

Princess (To Boyet): Do we?

Boyet: Em—no, madam. I don't think we have any paperwork on that—at least not with us. But we could send word to your father, and he could send it.

[Author's note: The Aquitaine business is unimportant to the story, but many readers don't understand it because it isn't explained clearly. Here's the correct explanation — and if you're a student, you can write this in your essay and you'll get an A. The previous King of Navarre, Ferdinand's father, loaned money to the King of France as assistance in a war that France was fighting. France promised to repay the money and pledged the large territory of Aquitaine in western France as security. France repaid half the money — one hundred thousand crowns — and now wants to relinquish half of Aquitaine in lieu of repaying the rest of the debt in cash. Ferdinand was never told by his father that one hundred thousand crowns had already been repaid. None of this matters to the story, but I want my readers to understand it.]

Princess: All right. *(To the King)* I will send a messenger and have the documentation sent as soon as possible.

King: Fine. In the meantime, you and your party are welcome to enjoy the park. It's quite lovely, and the weather is very pleasant right now. I can send a few servants to put up tents for you and take care of you.

Princess: Yes. Well, diplomats must be quick to adapt to local conditions, mustn't they?

King: Ha, ha—exactly. Really, I'd love to bring all of you inside, but, you know, with the oath and all.—Anyway, I'll come out and see you again tomorrow.

Princess: Thank you, my lord. Don't worry about us. We'll be just fine.

King: Until tomorrow, then.

(The King and his Lords leave, except for Biron, who moves closer to Rosaline.)

Biron: Lady, I will make a little place for you in my heart.

Rosaline: How wonderful.

Biron: Can you hear it beating? It beats for you.

Rosaline (Pretending to hear it): Sounds sick to me.

Biron: It's only sick for what it lacks—love.

Rosaline: You should see the doctor. He must have a pill for that.

(Biron sighs and walks out. Then Dumaine returns and takes Boyet aside.)

Dumaine: Sir, I just wanted to ask you. Who is that lady? *(Indicating Katherine)*

Boyet: Her name is Katherine. She's related to the Duke of Alenc, on. *[Author's note: That's supposed to be the French "c" with a curl, pronounced like "s".]*

Dumaine (Sighing): Katherine!

(Dumaine leaves. Then Longueville returns and speaks to Boyet.)

Longueville: Who is that lady? *(Indicating Maria)*

Boyet: That's Maria. She's related to Lord Falconbridge.

Longueville (Sighing): Maria!—Oh—oh—

(He walks away. Then Biron returns and takes Boyet aside.)

Biron: I've met that lady before, but I can't remember her name. *(Indicating Rosaline)*

Boyet: That's Rosaline.

Biron: Is she married?

Boyet: No, but you'd have better luck with a lottery ticket.

Biron: Ah.—I see.

(Biron leaves.)

Princess: Good answer, Boyet.

Boyet: He was just trying his luck, like the others. I would've done the same thing in his place.

Rosaline (Humourously): Would you now? And do you think you would've had better luck?

Boyet (Humourously): We should discuss that later—in your tent.

Rosaline: Ha!

Princess: Save your wits for the Duke and his lords.

Boyet: He's the King, madam.

Princess: I've demoted him.

Boyet: I think he likes you, madam.

Princess: Do you?

Boyet: Yes. His eyes were all over you.

Princess: Were they, now?—Huh.—First he takes an oath with his lords to avoid women for three years. Then he makes us camp in the park—the Princess of France and her ladies.—And now all of them want to make a move on us. I think we should make them all suffer a little.

Ladies: Yes.—Definitely.

Boyet: If you play your cards right, you could end up with him and all of Navarre.

Princess: You're funny, Boyet.—Come, ladies. Let's make our camp. We'll pretend we're in some strange land—which apparently we are.

(They all leave, with Boyet trailing, making sly eye contact with Rosaline.)

Act 3, Scene 1. *Armado comes in with Moth.*

Armado: Moth, I've decided to let that hillbilly Costard out. *(He hands Moth a key.)* Let him out and bring him to me.

Moth: What do you have in mind, boss?

Armado: I'm going to use him as a messenger. I'm going to have him deliver a love letter to Jaquenetta.

Moth: You think you can win her over with a letter? I'll bet she can't even read.

Armado: Do you have a better idea?

Moth: Yes. I'd say you should consider the girl's culture and environment.

Armado: How do you mean?

Moth: Well, for example, you can imitate the mating call of the Spanish fruit bat. Like this—*(He makes a weird call.)* Then you can imitate the mating dance of the brown-speckled sandpiper. Like this—*(He demonstrates an idiotic dance.)* And best of all, you can imitate a bull during rutting season. Like this—*(He demonstrates a bull.)* Use the nostrils alternately—like this—*(He blows noisily from each*

nostril.) You see? That's how it's done. Believe me, sir, these country girls get hot over that sort of thing.

Armado: And where, may I ask, did you learn all this?

Moth: I read it in *The Australian Journal of Ecosemiotics*.

(A pause for effect.)

Armado (To the audience.): Either this kid is putting me on, or I'm seriously behind the curve. *(To Moth)* Just go and get Costard, okay?

Moth: Yes, boss. *(Walking out)* And the horse shall be the messenger for the ass. *(Leaves)*

Armado: What?

(Armado paces slowly, deep in thought. He is looking the other way when Moth and Costard return and are standing next to him. Armado turns around and is startled and jumps.)

Moth: Boss, Costard says he had a little accident.

Armado: What sort of accident?

Costard: I fell forward and hurt my ass.

(Armado does a puzzled double-take.)

Armado: Well, there's an enigma for you.

Costard (Covering his ass in fright): Oh, no! You're not giving me an enigma!

(Armado looks at the audience for effect.)

Armado: Never mind. Costard, I've decided to enfranchise you.

Costard: You're going to make a franchise of me? Like Costard's Donuts, or something like that?

Armado: No, no. I'm setting you free, man.

Costard: Free! Oh! Thank you, sir!

Armado: You just have to perform one little service for me. You're to deliver this letter to Jaquenetta. *(He hands Costard the letter.)* And I'll even give you this remuneration. *(He gives Costard a coin.)*

Costard: A remuneration!—Oh.—I don't think I've ever seen one of those before. *(He studies the coin.)* Isn't remuneration Latin for three farthings?

Armado: No. A remuneration can be any amount. It's not a specific value.

Costard (Puzzled): Oh—Then this is surely a collector's item. I'll never part with it, sir.

(Biron comes in.)

Biron: Ah, there you are, Costard. I see you've been given your liberty.

Costard: Yes, sir. And I've been given a remuneration as well. How much can I buy with it, sir?

Biron: What's it worth?

Costard: I don't know, sir.

Biron: Then I don't know what you can buy with it.

Costard: Ah—of course. Then I suppose I shall just have to take my chances with it.

Biron: Yes. Or else just hold on to it. It might rise in value.

Costard: Ah. Now there's an idea. Thank you, sir.

(Costard starts to leave, and Biron holds him by the sleeve.)

Biron: Wait. Don't go away. Listen, how would you like to do me a little favour, my happy rustic?

Costard: When, sir?

Biron: This afternoon.

Costard: All right, sir. I'll do it.

(He starts to leave again and is held back by the sleeve.)

Biron: Wait. You don't even know what it is yet.

Costard: Oh. Am I to know in advance, then?

Biron: Of course, you donkey.

Costard: All right, sir. Whatever is more convenient for you.

Biron: Good. Now pay attention. There is a certain lady in the Princess's party named Rosaline. I want you to ask for her and give her this letter. *(He gives Costard a letter.)* And, of course, you're entitled to a guerdon for this service. *(He hands Costard a coin. Author's note: "Guerdon" means tip or remuneration.)*

Costard: A guerdon, sir! Oh! This looks bigger than a remuneration. That's very generous of you, sir. Thank you.

Biron: You're welcome. Just make sure Rosaline gets that letter.

Costard: I will, sir.—A whole guerdon—wow!

(Costard leaves.)

Moth (To Biron): So it's Rosaline, is it?

Biron: Keep it to yourself.—*(Sighing)* Rosaline—Rosaline.—I have been whipped by the whip of love, wielded by that giant dwarf Cupid—

Moth: Giant dwarf? That's an oxymoron.

Biron: Lord of all sighs and moans, keeper of all hearts, master of the codpiece. And so forth. He has planted Rosaline in my brain. I dream of her day and night. I will write poetry. I will pray. I will writhe on the floor in agony. I will fight off a large pack of small wolves for her—or a small pack of large wolves.—Oh!—Rosaline—

(He walks out, distracted. Others remain.)

Act 4, Scene 1. *In the park. Coming in are the Princess, Maria, Katherine, Rosaline, Boyet, the two unnamed Lords, and a Forester. The Forester is holding a bow and arrow for the Princess.*

Princess: Forester, where's the best place to shoot from?

Forester (Pointing): Over there at the edge of the woods, madam. You should be able to get a good shot at a deer. Can you shoot, madam?

Princess: Of course, I can shoot. As well as any man, in fact.

Forester: Ah. And do you like venison, or do you like to mount the deer's head on the wall?

Princess: Neither. I just want people to know what I'm capable of.

Forester: I'm sure the King will be impressed.

Princess: That's the idea.

(Costard comes in.)

Boyet: Here's a good citizen. Not our equal but still a good citizen.

Costard: Excuse me, I'm looking for the head lady.

Princess: We all have heads.

Costard: I mean the highest.

(The Ladies look at each other humourously, comparing heights.)

Princess: Highest? That's hard to say. One of us could always climb up a tree.

Costard: The biggest, then.

Princess: One does not ask a lady her weight.

Costard: No, not weight. I mean, em, you know—the chief woman.

Princess: Ah. The chief woman.

Costard: You sort of look like the chief woman to me, madam.

Princess: Do I look like her? Then I must have a double I didn't know about. Does she live here in Navarre?

Costard: Em, no—that is—

Princess: Well, if she doesn't live in Navarre, where does she live, and have you been there?

Costard: I'm very confused now, madam.—Oh—I hate it when this happens.

Princess: Never mind. Just take a deep breath and compose yourself.—(*Costard takes a deep breath.*)—Now, tell me what your business is.

Costard: I have a letter from Biron, which I am to give to your lady Rosaline.

Princess: I'll take it. (*She takes the letter from him.*) It's all right. Biron's a friend of mine.

Rosaline (Complaining): Madam!

Princess: It's all right, my dear. You'll get your letter.—Boyet, why don't you read it first, just to make sure it isn't obscene.

Boyet: Gladly, madam. (*He takes the letter and examines the outside.*) Oh. There's some mistake here. It's addressed to someone named Jaquenetta.

Princess: Jaquenetta?

Boyet: Yes, madam.

Princess (To Rosaline): Is that your alias?

Rosaline: Certainly not, madam.

Princess (To Boyet): Read it—aloud.

(*Boyet opens the letter and reads.*)

Boyet (Reading): “You are fairer than fair, more beautiful than beautiful, and dreamier than a dream. And just as King Cophetua conquered by love the poor beggar Zenelophon—”

Princess: Who?

Boyet: I never heard of them. (*Continues reading*) Just as so-and-so, et cetera—“I come to conquer you, not by force, not by command, but by the outpouring of my deepest love, which gushes like a fountain. I throw myself at your feet. I will give you fine clothes to replace your poor rags. and a title to add to your name. I am kissing every inch of your fair body—in my thoughts.—Yours in the most sincere devotion, Don Adriano de Armado.—P.S. The lion roars against thee, who standest as his prey. But if thou art a gentle lamb of love, he shall purr like a cat and invite thee to play.”

(*Pause for effect.*)

Princess: That may possibly be the worst love letter ever written in human history.

Boyet: The spelling and punctuation are all right.

Princess: What kind of bonehead would concoct such a piece of rubbish?

Boyet: Don Armado is a Spaniard. He's hanging out with the King and the lords. He's supposed to be in on that academy thing—you know, studying books and all that.

Princess: Then I'd say he's seriously conflicted.

Boyet: He is a bit of a wacko, from what I hear.

(The Princess takes the letter from Boyet.)

Princess (To Costard): Who gave you this letter?

Costard: Lord Biron, madam.

Princess: And who was it for?

Costard: Lady Rosaline. But now that I think of it, there was another letter.—Oh—I'm confused today.

Princess: I think you've made a mistake.

Costard: I—I'm very embarrassed, madam.

Princess: Never mind. *(To Rosaline, handing her the letter)* You hold on to this, Rosaline. It may prove useful.—Come, everyone. Let's go bag a deer.

(All are leaving, but Costard mistakenly assumes he has been invited, so Boyet stops to dismiss him.)

Boyet: Not you.

Costard: Oh. Sorry.

(Boyet takes a coin out of his pocket and gives it to Costard.)

Boyet: Here. You've earned it.

(Costard examines the unfamiliar coin.)

Boyet: It's a pourboire. *[Author's note: French for "tip".]*

Costard: A what, sir?

Boyet: A pourboire.

Costard: Pourboire.—Mm.—I'm going to add this to my collection. Thank you, sir.

(Costard and Boyet leave separately.)

Act 4, Scene 2. *Coming in are Dull, Holofernes, and Nathaniel.*

Nathaniel: That was quite a fine deer the Princess bagged.

Holofernes: Yes. It was full of blood, like a ripe pomegranate which hangs like a jewel in the sky—that is, heaven, or the celestial sphere—and then falls to earth—meaning the soil, or terra firma—there to break and send forth its seeds in the wind.

Nathaniel: Spoken like a true scholar, sir. Your erudition does equal justice to the language, the pomegranate, and the deer. It was a five-year-old buck, wasn't it?

Holofernes: No, sir. It was not more than four.

Dull: No, it was just two years old.

Holofernes: Two years old! Listen to him!

(Holofernes and Nathaniel laugh.)

Holofernes: How does he reason—by innuendo, or by insinuation? It certainly isn't by deduction. *(To Dull)* What is your *modus operandi*, you unlettered rube?

Dull: Eh?

Nathaniel: The constable is benighted, Master Holofernes.

Holofernes: Indeed, he is, Master Nathaniel.

Dull: Knighted! I'm to be knighted?

(Holofernes and Nathaniel laugh.)

Holofernes: You are a simpleton, aren't you? You could be a poster boy for ignorance. And you're small enough to fit on the poster.

Nathaniel: Don't be hard on him, sir. He is not educated as we are. His mind has not been enlarged by the dainty delicacies of book learning. He's just a dull creature.

Holofernes: And aptly named—Dull.

Dull: Yes, that's my name. Anthony Dull.

Nathaniel: Nevertheless, God makes all creatures for a purpose. Some are made to be looked down upon—with compassion and charity, of course.

Holofernes: Well said, Master Nathaniel.

(Jaquenetta and Costard come in. She is holding a letter.)

Jaquenetta: Master Parson, please read me this letter. It's from Don Armado. Costard gave it to me.

Nathaniel: All right, my dear. *(He takes the letter, opens it, and peruses it.)*

Holofernes: Can you not read, girl?

Jaquenetta: No, sir.

Holofernes: What does it say, Master Nathaniel?

Nathaniel: It's a love poem.

Jaquenetta: Oh! A love poem!

Holofernes: Read it aloud. I like poetry—if it's good.

Nathaniel (Reading):

“My love is like the humble prune
Made from the purple plums of June,
And so beneath the glowing moon
I pray that I will be yours soon—”

Jaquenetta: Oh!

Nathaniel (Reading):

“My heart is like the gurgling stream
That flows through meadows as I dream
Of you and me in love's moonbeams—
Or so it seems.”

Jaquenetta: Oh!

Holofernes: Let me see that.

(He takes the letter from Nathaniel and studies it.)

Holofernes: Wait a minute. *(To Jaquenetta)* This letter is not from Don Armado, and it was not sent to you.

(Costard is nodding to himself in embarrassment.)

Jaquenetta: It wasn't?

Holofernes: No. It's to Lady Rosaline—from Biron.

Jaquenetta (Downcast): Oh. *(She gives Costard a harsh look.)*

Costard: I was afraid to tell you.

Holofernes: Lady Rosaline is one of the ladies attending the Princess of France. *(To Nathaniel)* She's here on diplomatic business, you know.

Nathaniel: Yes.—Say, do you suppose Biron is trying to interfere in some way?

Holofernes: Interfere? You mean, like helping the Princess instead of the King?

Nathaniel: Something like that. There could be something going on that the King wouldn't like.

Holofernes: Yes, yes. It's possible. *(To Jaquenetta)* Now you take this letter and deliver it to the King. He'll want to see it. It could be a matter of treason. *(He gives her the letter.)*

Jaquenetta: Yes, sir. I'll do that. Thank you, sir.—Costard, you come with me..

Costard: All right.

(Jaquenetta and Costard leave.)

Holofernes: Maybe it's not treason. Anyway, what did you think of the poem?

Nathaniel: Not too bad for an amateur.

Holofernes: I didn't like it. I thought it came across as too pedantic.

Nathaniel: Do you think so? I don't.

Holofernes: Let's discuss it over dinner. I have an invitation at the home of one of my pupils, and I'm sure they won't mind if I bring you along.

Nathaniel: Thank you, sir. I'd be glad to.

Holofernes: You can come, too, Master Dull. I'm sure you'll find the conversation most enlightening—after which you will no longer be benighted.

Dull (Downcast): All right, sir. I'll come along, just to be polite—although I was very much looking forward to being knighted.

(They leave, with Holofernes and Nathaniel laughing.)

Act 4, Scene 3. *(Get ready for brilliant stagecraft!) Biron comes in holding a paper.*

Biron: If ever there was a fool for love, it's me. How I suffer for it. I've already sent Rosaline one love poem, and now I've written another. I've lost my mind over that girl.—Oh! I see the King. I'd better hide. I think I'll hide behind this convenient bush.

(He turns toward the rear of the stage, expecting a bush, and reacts with confusion and annoyance. The suggestion is that there has been a mistake.)

Biron (Louder, toward the wing): I said—I think I'll hide behind this convenient bush!

(A stagehand comes out, holding a tree branch, and holds it at the rear, and Biron "hides" behind it. The stagehand remains there holding the branch. Then the King comes in.)

King (Sighing): Ah!—Princess of France!—I'm in love. And this is my love poem to you. *(He recites)*

“The smell of lilacs in the morning dew
 Cannot compare with the smell of you,
 Nor bluebells blooming at sunrise
 Compare with the blue of your lovely eyes.
 I shed tears for you upon my pillow,
 As rain bends down the weeping willow.
 O queen of queens, O supreme goddess,
 I would cry my tears upon your bodice.”

Uh-oh, it's Longueville. I'd better hide. *(He turns and sees what has happened at rear stage. Louder, and with some annoyance)* I'll hide behind a convenient bush—but a bigger one!

(The stagehand gestures to another stagehand in the wing, and the suggestion is that there is confusion offstage. Then the second stagehand gives a somewhat larger tree branch to the first stagehand, who now holds it up for the King to hide behind. Then Longueville comes in, holding a paper.)

Longueville: I should be ashamed of myself for breaking the oath. I wonder if I'm the first.

Biron *(Aside, behind the bush)*: No.

King *(Aside, behind the bush)*: No.

Longueville: I couldn't help it. *(Sighing)* Maria!—Maria!—I hope she likes this poem. *(He reads)*

“The tears I cry on my pillow
 Make the bedbugs feel sorry for me.
 The pain and heartache that keep me wide awake
 Break the heart of each louse and each flea.
 The mosquitoes and flies make their own little cries,
 The nits and the silverfish moan.
 It's the song that they sing as I pull on my ding,
 Oh, why must I sleep all alone?”

Biron *(Aside, behind the bush)*: He's really sick.

Longueville: Uh-oh, I see Dumaine coming. I'd better hide behind a bush.

(He turns to the rear, expecting a bush, and there is confusion among the stagehands. Finally, the second stagehand comes in with a large piece of plywood the size of a door.)

Longueville *(Annoyed)*: Or something!

(There is further confusion about where the board should be positioned and who is supposed to hold it. The Director can come out and participate in this chaos, with people talking quite audibly, arguing and correcting each other. Longueville acts very embarrassed and finally hides behind the board. The second stagehand asks Longueville, “Do you want me to hold it up for you, or do you want to hold it yourself?” The second stagehand finally holds it up with one hand while facing the rear and pretending to be inconspicuous to the audience. The Director can elaborate on this chaotic interval, but it must be done deadpan so it seems genuine. Eventually, Dumaine comes in, holding a paper. He pauses for effect as if stunned by the onstage mishap.)

Dumaine *(Sighing)*: Oh, Kate!—Wonderful Kate!—I can't get her out of my mind. She's in my blood. She's like a fever. I'm sweating. I'm delirious.

Biron *(Aside, behind the bush)*: He's got malaria.

Dumaine: I know she'll love this poem. It's postmodern. Very experimental. *(He reads)* "If the molecules of your panties found their way to my nose, then they would go to my brain. Then I would both possess the molecules and be possessed by them—"

Biron (Aside, behind the bush): What?

Dumaine (Reading): "Alive in the sight of you, wishing a bite of you, my eyes eat you, my brain digests you like meat. And then, sucking out the nutrients of love, I must excrete you. And so is my love complete."

Biron (Aside, behind the bush): He belongs in a psycho ward.

Dumaine: Alas, I have broken my oath. I've fallen for a woman. Of course, I wouldn't feel so bad about it if I weren't the only one.

(Longueville steps forward.)

Longueville: What a horny devil you are, Dumaine! And I thought you were the most innocent one.

Dumaine: What? You heard me?

Longueville: Yes. So you're in love with Katherine, eh? Ha, ha! So much for your will power.

(The King steps forward.)

King: You're one to talk, Longueville. You're hot for Maria.

Dumaine: He is?

King: Yes.

Longueville: Oh. Did you hear me?

King: Yes. You should both be ashamed. You swore to be serious scholars and avoid women for three years, and as soon as the Princess of France shows up, you fall in love with two of her ladies.—Tsk! I'm very disappointed. And wait till Biron finds out. I'm sure he'll have something to say about it.

(Biron steps forward.)

Biron: Well! Well! Is the pot calling the kettles black?

King: Eh? Where'd you come from?

Biron: The King is madly in love with the Princess.

Dumaine and Longueville: No!—Is he!

King: Oops!—I guess you overheard my, uh, uh—

Biron: Your love poem. Yes.

King: Oh, hell.

Biron: And the others. Not very good poems, any of them. However, at least you're better at writing poetry than you are at honouring an oath. Really, I have every right to criticize all three of you. Falling in love and writing love poems. Getting all sentimental over a woman. You wouldn't catch me doing that. I'm the only one who has stuck to the oath.

Longueville: Who's that coming?

King: It's Jaquenetta and Costard.

Biron: Okay, gotta run! I have an appointment!

(Biron starts to leave, but the King grabs him by the sleeve.)

King: What's the matter?

(Jaquenetta and Costard come in. Jaquenetta is holding Biron's letter to Rosaline.)

Biron (Nervously): Nothing.

Jaquenetta: God bless the King.

King: Hello, miss. What have you got there?

Costard: It's treason, sir.

Biron: It's not treason!

King: How would you know?

Biron: Em—it doesn't look like treason, that's all.

King (To Costard): What's the treason—specifically?

Costard: Em, I don't actually know, sir.

Jaquenetta: Master Holofernes, the schoolmaster, said I should bring you this letter. He said it could be treason.

(The King takes the letter.)

King: Where did you get this?

Jaquenetta: I got it from Costard, sir.

King (To Costard): Then where did you get it?

(A nervous look is being exchanged between Biron and Costard.)

Costard: Em—em—Ah, now I remember. It was Don Armado. That Spanish fellow. He gave it to me.

King (Laughing): Treason from Armado? That's funny! *(He looks at the letter without opening it.)* I'm sure it's a joke.—Here, Biron. You read it to us.

Biron: Me?

King: Yes, why not? You have a good sense of humour. Go on. Read it.

(Biron takes the letter nervously, opens it and looks at it, afraid to read.)

King: Go on. Read it aloud.

Biron: Ha, ha, ha, ha—it's nothing! *(He tears it up.)* There's no treason. Forget it. Nothing to worry about.

King: It must be funny if you're laughing.

Biron: I'm not—ha, ha!—Just a nervous reaction, that's all!—Em, may I be excused, sir? I have an appointment.

Longueville (To the King): It's something to do with Biron, obviously. *(To Biron)* Isn't it?

Biron: No!

(Dumaine picks up the pieces of paper and examines them.)

Dumaine: Why, I do believe this is your handwriting, Biron.

Biron: No, no! It's not mine!

Dumaine: You know what this looks like? This looks like—a love letter.

Biron: Oh, damn! *(He makes a silent threatening gesture at Costard.)*

Dumaine: It's Rosaline! Biron's in love with Rosaline!

Biron: Oh, damn, damn, damn. Bloody hell.

King: Biron, you're in love with Rosaline?

Biron: Yes. I confess.

King (Mimicking Biron): Falling in love and writing love poems? Getting all sentimental over a woman? You wouldn't catch me doing that. I'm the only one who has stuck to the oath.

(Biron is disgusted and goes over and shoves the stagehands offstage and throws and kicks the plywood and tree branches, all the while cursing.)

Biron (To Jaquenetta and Costard): Who don't you two go and pick some hemlock and brew yourselves some tea!

Jaquenetta: Oh!—Well!—Come along, Costard. *(To the King)* By your leave, sir.

(Jaquenetta and Costard leave.)

Biron: All right, it's all out in the open. But we're all guilty of the same thing, aren't we? We've all forgotten the oath and made fools of ourselves. However—my excuse is Rosaline. She would turn any man into a total fool. She's totally awesome.

King: You think so? I don't think she's such a big deal.

Dumaine: She's just average.

Longueville: Not even that.

Biron: Oh, yeah, right! I should open an eye clinic. I'd get rich on the three of you. The other women are nothing compared to Rosaline.

Dumaine: Get a grip, Biron.

Longueville: Maria's the best.

Dumaine: No. Kate is the best.

King: Well, I say you're all wrong, but this is the sort of argument that goes nowhere, so let's forget about it. I'm just very unhappy that we made an oath, and we all failed miserably in sticking to it. It hurts my pride.

Biron: Well—there must be a loophole in it somewhere.

King: Is there? Okay, so find it.

Biron: Okay. I'm thinking.—We said we wanted to study things that were unknown to us, right?

Others: Yes.

Biron: It could be in books, but it could also be outside of books—right?

Others: Yes.—Could be.

Biron: Now, we all feel changed in some way by falling in love, don't we?

Others: Yes.

Biron: So we must have encountered something previously unknown to us, right?

Others: Yes.

Biron: Well, there you go. We were true to our mission, weren't we?

Others: Yes.—I suppose.

Biron: And furthermore, wouldn't you agree that if we were to shut these women out of our lives now because of an oath, that would be stupid, wouldn't it?

Others: Yes.—For sure.

Biron: And we didn't take an oath to be stupid. We took an oath to be enlightened, didn't we?

King: Yes. Biron, I'm not sure it's logical, but it makes sense.

Biron: We're not lawyers, are we? Common sense is good enough for us, right?

King: You're right.

Biron: Fine. So let's just agree that we're not guilty and consider the matter closed.

Others: Yes!–Agreed!

(Biron begins a comical sequence of handshakes, with everyone saying “Not guilty!” and “Congratulations!”)

Biron: Gentlemen, there is still one big problem.

King: What’s that?

Biron: How do we win them over? How do we get them to love us?

(The King thinks for a moment.)

King: Let’s do something to entertain them. They must be terribly bored out there in the park.

Biron: Yes, that’s a good idea—entertainment. But we need something else, too—before the entertainment. We need to think of some clever way to get close to them and pair off—you know, test the waters.

Longueville: How?

Dumaine: Disguise ourselves as African natives—ha!

King: That would be too silly.

Biron: Hmm—Dumaine, hold that thought.

King: We’ll think of something. Come on.

(They all leave.)

Act 5, Scene 1. *Holofernes, Nathaniel, and Dull come in.*

Holofernes: I’m stuffed. Satis est quod sufficit. [*Author’s note: “Enough is enough.”*]

Nathaniel: It was more than enough.

Holofernes: Ab ovo usque ad mala. [*Author’s note: “From egg to apple”—i.e., a complete banquet.*]

Nathaniel: I must say it is a pleasure to share a dinner with a man of such erudition.

Holofernes: I was about to say that myself—ha, ha!

Nathaniel: Intellect without pretense is such a rare quality, isn’t it?

Holofernes: Indeed, it is.

Nathaniel: Some smart people can be very annoying—like the King’s friend Don Armado.

Holofernes: Oh, you needn’t tell me. I know him too well. A pompous man—and rather odd, if I may say so.

Nathaniel: Yes, I agree.

Holofernes: His verbosity is prodigious, yet his pronunciation is evidence of a certain lack of sophistication. When he says the word “debt,” for example, you can’t hear the “b.”

Nathaniel: He doesn’t fool us.

Holofernes: Not for a moment.

(Armado, Moth, and Costard come in.)

Armado: Master Holofernes—Master Nathaniel—greetings.

Holofernes and Nathaniel: And to you, sir.

Armado: I’m glad I found you. I need to consult with your learned selves.

Holofernes: Consult away, by all means.

Armado: The King desires to entertain the Princess and her party during the posteriors of this day—which common folk would refer to as the afternoon—ha, ha!

Costard (Aside to Moth): The posteriors of the day?

Moth (Aside to Costard): I’m his page. I have to listen to this all the time.

Holofernes: It follows logically, sir, as the anteriors are behind us, being the morning. And yet—paradoxically—etymology would demand that the anteriors should always be before us and the posteriors should always be behind us. Is that not so?

Nathaniel (To the audience): Now that is real smartness for you. You wouldn’t have heard that in any other theatre.

Armado: Your paradox has me flummoxed, sir. I throw myself at your feet and beg for mercy—ha, ha!

Holofernes: Have no fear. This is but a harmless exercise in postprandial philosophy. Now what about this entertainment?

Armado: As you know, sir, I am a close confidant of the King, though modesty prevents me from dwelling on that. At any rate, he would like to entertain the ladies since they have been forced to camp in the park. And he asked me if I had any ideas. Well, of course, I have many, many ideas—such as, for instance, some sort of pageant, or show, or antic, or perhaps a firework. And then I thought of you two, being two of the jolliest fellows, full of fun, ever to—to be jolly and funny—in Navarre—or elsewhere. So I thought I would seek you out and ask you, em, what your ideas might be—possibly.

Holofernes: The Nine Worthies. [*Author’s note: A pageant presenting nine famous men of history.*] Pure history. Nothing more exciting—especially to ladies.—What do you think, Master Nathaniel?

Nathaniel: The perfect choice, sir. But where will you find nine actors for all the roles?

Holofernes: We can play multiple parts if we have to. Now let’s see—You can be Joshua. I’ll be Judas Maccabeus. Don Armado here can be Hector. This fellow—(*Indicating Costard*)—can be Pompey the Great. And the page can be Hercules.

Armado: Him? Hercules? He's too small.

Holofernes: He can represent Hercules as a child. Don't worry, I'll figure out how to explain it to the audience. It's just a matter of stagecraft.

Armado: Fine. I like it. But just in case it doesn't turn out well, we should have something else to present. I thought maybe something short and humourous.

Holofernes: Well, it's your project, isn't it? You already have many ideas. You said so yourself.

Armado: Ha, ha—yes, I did.

Holofernes (To Dull): Master Dull, what's the matter? You haven't said a word.

Dull: I've hardly understood a word, sir.

Holofernes: You are a dull one. Shall we make use of you in the pageant?

Dull: I don't know, sir.

Holofernes: Do you have any talents for entertainment?

Dull (Thinking): I can blow a whistle, sir.

Holofernes: Blow a whistle—ha, ha. Never mind. We'll just keep you on hand for security. How's that?

Dull: I'll do my duty, sir.

Holofernes: Good for you. Let's go.

(They all leave.)

Act 5, Scene 2. *The Princess comes in with Maria, Katherine, and Rosaline.*

Princess: Now it's gifts, ladies. This was supposed to be a diplomatic mission, but now it's turned into something else. Look at this diamond ring. I got it from the King.

Rosaline: Ooh!—Sweet! Anything else?

Princess: Yes, a long love poem. What did you get?

Rosaline: I got a love poem from Biron. He thinks I'm a goddess. And I got this very expensive scarf.

Princess: What about you, Katherine? What did Dumaine send you?

Katherine: This pair of gloves. They're very nice, too. And some rubbishy poetry. I don't take it seriously.

Maria: I got a long love letter from Longueville, and a short string of pearls—although I would have preferred a short letter and a long string of pearls.

Princess: Ladies, listen to me. You mustn't take a man at face value. You must test him. You must even make him suffer a little to prove that he loves you. If you're too easy to get, he ceases to respect you.

Rosaline: Torture them. That's what I intend to do to Biron. I'll have him eating out of the palm of my hand like a dog.

Princess: You will. All four of them are going to be perfect fools in love. And you know why? Because they're so learned. The smarter a man is, the worse the fool he becomes in love. Consider. They all took an oath to be serious scholars for three years and avoid women, and then when we show up, they're writing love poems to us.

Maria: I think we should have some fun with them.

Princess: Yes. It's what they deserve for making us sleep in the park.

(Boyet comes in.)

Boyet: Ladies, get ready. The men are preparing to attack.

Princess: What do you mean?

Boyet: I spied on them. They're going to come disguised as Russians. They'll try to dance with you and make romantic talk.

Princess: Four men of Navarre are going to disguise themselves as Russians to try to impress four French women?

Boyet: Yes.

Princess: Does this make sense?

Boyet: No.

Princess: You see, ladies? What did I just say about learned men making fools of themselves? Such insanity must be opposed—but not right away. Listen, I have a plan. We'll all wear masks. And to compound the confusion, we'll exchange gifts so they all think they're talking to the right lady.—Rosaline, you switch with me.—And Maria, you switch with Katherine.

(The Ladies exchange presents.)

Princess: We'll let them try to court us, and the next time we meet them undisguised, we'll be able to embarrass them.

Rosaline: So, are we going to dance with them or not?

Princess: Not. We'll just act totally uninterested. I want to see them squirm.

(A horn sounds, but not a trumpet. Rather, something atypical and weird.)

Boyet: That'll be them.

Princess: Masks, ladies!

(The Ladies rush out and return quickly in masks. Then the King and his Lords come in disguised as Russians, preceded by Moth, as himself, serving as a herald.)

Moth: All hail the most beautiful ladies in the world!

(The Ladies turn their backs to him.)

Moth: Em, the most beautiful ladies who ever showed their—backs—to human sight.

Biron (To Moth): Eyes, stupid.

Moth: Who ever showed their eyes to human sight.—Em—

Biron (To Moth): Go on.

Moth: Grant us the favour—not to behold—

Biron: To behold, stupid.

Moth: To behold with your sun-beamed eyes—em—your sun-beamed eyes—

Boyet (To Moth): They're ignoring you.

Moth (To Biron): Sir, they're ignoring us.

Biron: Oh—just get lost, you idiot.

Moth: You still have to pay me for this.

(Moth leaves.)

Rosaline (Posing as the Princess): What do these characters want, Boyet? Do they speak our language?

Boyet: I'll ask. *(To the disguised Lords)* What do you want with the Princess?

Biron: Just a friendly visit.

Boyet (To Rosaline): They're just here for a friendly visit, madam.

Rosaline: Fine. They just had it. Now they can go.

Boyet (To Biron): She says you've had your visit, and now you can go.

King: But tell her we have measured many miles to come here.

Boyet (To Rosaline): They say they have measured many miles to come here, madam.

Rosaline: How many feet have they walked? If they've measured, they ought to know.

Boyet (To the King): How many feet would that be, sir?

Biron: Look, just tell her we've walked a lot of weary steps. I don't know how many feet it would work out to. *(To the Ladies)* Hey, give us a break, all right? Please show us your beautiful faces so that we may worship them like the humble savages we are.

(The Ladies turn around and face the Lords.)

Rosaline: We are not in the mood to show our faces today, just as the sun doesn't show its face on a cloudy day.

King: Well, uh—Say, how about a little dancing?

Rosaline: But there is no music.

King: No problem.

(The King snaps his fingers, and an accordion player appears suddenly and starts playing a polka.)

Rosaline: I'm sure that's not Russian music, sir.

King: That's okay. It's danceable.

(He nods to the Lords. All the men now pair up with the Ladies of their choice — erroneously, of course — and attempt to dance with them, but the Ladies refuse to move.)

King: You're not dancing.

Rosaline: That was very nice. Thank you. Now you may leave.

(The King nods to the accordion player, who leaves.)

King (To Rosaline): Well, uh—how about a friendly chat, then?

Rosaline: In private, I suppose?

King: Yes, yes. That would be sensational.

(The King moves apart with Rosaline for a private conversation.)

Biron (To the Princess, posing as Rosaline): Shall we have a nice, little chat, madam?

Princess: All right, but keep it clean.

(Biron takes the Princess aside. Dumaine now approaches Maria, who is posing as Katherine.)

Dumaine: Madam, shall we get better acquainted?

Maria: All right, but don't get any ideas.

(Dumaine takes Maria aside.)

Katherine (To Longueville): I suppose you'll be wanting a friendly tete-a-tete with me, won't you?

Longueville: Oh, yes, indeed!

Katherine: Why—specifically?

Longueville: Why?—Well—obviously—em, here we are and, well, I just thought, you know—

Katherine: Did you really walk all the way from Russia?

Longueville: Em, well—part of the way. We also took a boat.

Katherine: Did you come by way of Dnepropetrovsk or Cherepovets?

Longueville: Em—I'm not sure, actually. I, uh, slept a lot.

Katherine: I'm very interested in geography. You can tell me more about your trip.

Longueville: Heh, heh—actually, I, uh, wanted to talk about something more personal.

Katherine: As you wish.

(Longueville takes Katherine aside to talk to her.)

Boyet (To the audience): These guys are getting turned like shish-kebab.

(After an interval, Rosaline speaks.)

Rosaline: That's enough, girls. They've had their chat.

(The Ladies regroup, and the Men regroup.)

Biron: Jeez! They're so unfriendly.

King: These women are crazy. I've had enough. Let's get out of here.

(The King and his party leave. Then the Ladies unmask.)

Princess: So much for the Academy of Navarre.

Rosaline: I'm sure we made them feel like idiots.

Princess: I really made Biron suffer.

Maria: I thought Dumaine was going to cry.

Katherine: I thought Longueville was going to throw up.

Princess: They still want us. I'm sure of that.

Rosaline: I wonder what they'll do next.

Boyet: They'll be back. They won't give up.

Rosaline: You think so?

Boyet: After a humiliation like that, they'll want to redeem themselves. They'll come back without disguises and try again.

Princess: What do you think we should do?

Rosaline: Let's switch our presents back. Then when they come back, we'll tell them about the stupid Russians who were here.

Princess: Perfect!

Boyet: Better do it now. I see them coming.

Princess (To the Ladies): Come.

(The Ladies leave. Then the King and Lords return in their normal guises.)

King: Excuse me, good sir. Can you tell me where the Princess is?

Boyet: In her tent, your Majesty. Shall I convey a message in your behalf?

King: Yes. Please ask her if she would be kind enough to come out and speak to me for moment.

Boyet: I will, sir, and I know she will, too.

(Boyet leaves.)

Biron: He's a slick one, that Boyet. I think he's managing this whole game.

King: Could be.

Biron: Maybe he wants to boink those ladies himself.

(Boyet returns with the four Ladies.)

King: All hail, ladies, and we bid you a fair day.

Princess: Hail on a fair day? That would be a meteorological impossibility.

King: Ah—yes. I know what you mean. In fact, I was going to invite you and your party to come inside, in the court.

Princess: Oh, but sir, you mustn't break your oath. We're just fine out here in the park.

King: But the lords and I have agreed to disregard the oath for your sake. And, em, we like you all very much.

Princess: Oh, but sir, that makes us the cause of your breaking the oath, and we would feel guilty about that.

King: But you must be lonely out here all by yourselves.

Princess: Not at all. In fact, we were just recently visited by a traveling troupe of Russian clowns.

King: Em—clowns, madam?

Princess: I don't know how else to describe them. They were quite strange.

Rosaline: They tried to hit on us.

Biron: Did they now?

Rosaline: Yes. They were such a bunch of losers. I was glad to see them go.

Biron (Offended): Well!—I don't think that's a very nice thing to say.

Rosaline: Why should you be offended?

Biron: Me? I'm not. I only meant, em—I don't know what I meant. You know, you're very harsh with your tongue, madam.

Rosaline: Ha, ha, ha! Am I now?

Biron: Yes. And I'd feel very offended if I were referred to as a loser.

Rosaline: Which Russian were you, then?

Biron: Me?

Rosaline: Yes.

(The King and Lords huddle aside quickly.)

King: They know it was us.

Dumaine: Let's just admit it and laugh it off as a joke.

Princess (To Rosaline): I think you just kicked them in a private place.

Rosaline: Biron looks sick.—Did you have a stormy trip from Russia, Biron?—Ha, ha!

(Biron throws his hat on the ground in anger.)

Biron: That's it! I've had it! Go ahead and ridicule me. I don't care any more. I'll never ask you to dance again. I'll never write you another poem. I'll never wear a costume. I won't even try to be clever or intellectual. I'm just going to be simple, simple, simple. Just me. Just plain old Biron.

(Brief pause) I'm going to say this just once. I love you, Rosaline. That's it. There, I've said it.

Rosaline: Plain and simple, eh? I don't believe it. Everything with you is calculated.

Biron: Look at us! We are sick men. We have a plague. And you ladies are it. We looked in your eyes—and we were done for.

Princess: You mustn't blame us. We never did anything to encourage you.

Biron (To the Lords): I give up. You say something.

King (To the Princess): Madam, what can we say or do to be on your good side?

Princess: You were the Russians. Admit it.

King: Yes. We were.

Princess: And what did you whisper in the ear of the lady you loved?

King: I told her I respected her more than anyone else in the world.

Princess: And what if she were to contradict you? Would you cease to love her?

King: No. I would throw myself at her mercy.

Princess: Rosaline, what did he say to you?

Rosaline: He said he would either marry me or die as my lover.

Princess: Fine. It appears that the King will die as your lover.

King: Wait a minute. I never said that to Rosaline. I never even spoke to her.

Rosaline: You put this pretty kerchief in my hand when you were speaking to me. *(She shows a kerchief.)* But you can have it back if you want.

King: What?—Wait a minute. I gave that to the Princess. I recognized her from the diamond ring I sent her.

Princess: Rosaline was wearing it. We all switched present. You were speaking to her, and Biron was speaking to me.—Do you want your scarf back, Biron?

Biron: No! I don't want it, or you either. *(To the Lords)* You see how mean they are? They just want to make us look ridiculous. *(To Boyet)* You knew it all along, didn't you? It was probably your idea.

Boyet: We are French, sir. We have a sense of humour.

Biron: Nuts!

(He picks up his hat. Then Costard comes in, dressed as Pompey the Great.)

Costard: My lord, the three Worthies want to know if they should come in now.

Biron: Three? Aren't there nine Worthies?

Costard: They're playing multiple parts, sir—except for me. I'm Pompey the Great.

King: You? You're Pompey the Great?

Costard: Yes, my lord. They thought I'd be suited for it. I don't know anything about him, but I agreed.

Princess: Are we to be entertained? How wonderful!

King: Em, yes, madam. But this is not what you would call professional quality.

Princess: That's all right. I love amateur productions.

Biron (To Costard): Yes. All right. Get on with it.

Costard: It'll be a good show, my lords. Don't worry.

(Costard leaves.)

King (Aside to Biron): This is going to be a disaster.

Biron (Aside to the King): So what? We can't look any worse than we do now. If they put on a bad show, we might look better by comparison. Let the ladies laugh at them instead of us.

King (Aside to Biron): Then let's make sure of it.

(Biron whispers to Dumaine and Longueville. Then Armado comes in. He bows profusely to the King.)

Armado: My royal liege, your exalted Highness and most majestic Majesty, here is the program for our pageant.

(Armado presents a paper to the King, and the two of them move apart while the King studies it.)

Princess (To Biron): A friend of yours?

Biron: No. He's a visitor from space.

Princess: That's all right. As long as he's not Mexican.

Armado (To the King): The schoolmaster may be a little too over the edge for his part, but it'll work out. I promise.

King: Yes, yes. I don't need any explanations. Just put on your show.

Armado: Thank you, my lord!

(Armado bows profusely, walking out backwards. The King returns to the others.)

King (To the Ladies): It's a little pageant for your amusement—The Nine Worthies. Armado—that was him—will be Hector of Troy. Costard is Pompey the Great. Nathaniel, the curate, will be Alexander the Great. The page Moth will be Hercules. And Holofernes, the schoolmaster, will be Judas Maccabeus. And if those four go over okay, they'll change costumes and present the other five.

Biron: Those are five already.

King: No, four.

Biron: Five. Hector, Pompey, Alexander, Hercules, and Judas.

King: Oh—right. Whatever.—Anyway, ladies, I can promise you a show unlike any other you've ever seen.

Biron: Or will ever see again.

Princess: We can hardly wait.

Ladies: Yes! Yes!

(Costard comes in as Pompey, armed with sword and shield.)

Costard: I am Pompey—

Biron: No, you're not.

Costard: Sir, the pageant is in progress.—Ahem.—I am Pompey—

Boyet: His colours and coat of arms are wrong.

Biron (Calling toward the wing): Who's in charge of wardrobe?

Costard: Ahem!—I am Pompey the Big.

Dumaine: Great, not Big.

Costard: Right. I meant Great.—I am Pompey the Great. I'm fresh from battle and I was walking along the coast, minding my own business, and what do I see here but this sweet French lady—from France. So I laid my arms at her legs—that is, my weapons, not my actual arms. I have to keep those.—And I hope she accepts them.

(He lays the sword and shield before her.)

Princess: Thank you, great Pompey.

Costard (To Biron): That was all right, wasn't it?

Biron: Unforgettable. Who's next?

King: Alexander the Great.

(Costard stands aside as Nathaniel comes in, dressed as Alexander the Great.)

Nathaniel: When I was alive, I was the world's commander. That is why they called me Alexander.

Boyet: No. You were born with that name.

Nathaniel: Don't interrupt.—To the furthest corners of the earth I spread my conquering might. My army was the biggest. It was quite a sight.

Biron: Who said history was dull?

Boyet: He doesn't have Alexander's nose.

Biron: I think it depends on the angle.—Pompey!

Costard: Yes, my lord?

Biron: See how obedient he is? He's Pompey the Great but he listens to me.—Pompey, get rid of Alexander. He's made enough trouble.

Nathaniel: What? This is an insult!

Costard: Yes, my lord. *(To Nathaniel)* O great conquering Alexander, you must leave. You are no longer worthy.

Nathaniel: This is very improper. I'm very disappointed.

(Nathaniel retires to the wing.)

Costard (To Biron): I hate to hurt his feelings, sir. He's a nice man—and a very good bowler.

Biron: Never mind. History is full of hurt feelings.

Princess: Who's next?

King: Two more, madam.

(Costard stands aside as Holofernes comes in as Judas Maccabeus and Moth as Hercules.)

Holofernes: This midget is the mighty Hercules when he was a child. You can tell he was destined to become a great hero. He killed the three-headed dog Cerberus and strangled various horrible creatures with his bare hands—later on, of course, when he was grown up.

(Moth poses proudly, not noticing Holofernes's signals to leave. Finally, Holofernes whispers to him and pushes him toward the wing, where he retires.)

Holofernes: I am Judas—

Dumaine: Judas? You traitor!

Holofernes: Not Judas Iscariot. Judas Maccabeus.

Biron: Jew!

Holofernes: Yes, I am a Jew. The Maccabees were Jewish patriots.

Dumaine: Jude-ass!

Longueville: Go eat some pork.

Holofernes: You're ruining my speech.

Boyet: Is he really a Worthy?

Biron: Yeah, worthy of this! *(He blows a loud Bronx cheer.)* Get lost!

Holofernes: I protest! This is not nice! It's not nice at all!

(Holofernes retires to the wing.)

Princess: Poor Judas Maccabeus!

King: Are you enjoying this, madam?

Princess: Oh, yes, very much.—Aren't we, ladies?

Ladies: Yes! Yes!

Princess: Please continue.

(Armado comes in as Hector.)

Biron: Here's Hector of Troy.

Dumaine: Troy, New York?

King: No, not Troy, New York. The old Troy—somewhere in Asia Minor.

Boyet: I don't believe he's Hector.

Longueville: I think his feet are too big.

Dumaine: How would you know?

Longueville: Just look. It's obvious.

Biron: His haircut is historically wrong.

Dumaine: Are you sure?

Biron: Yes. Hector wore a ponytail.

Dumaine: He did not.

Biron: He did.

Armado: Quiet!—Mars, the god of war, gave Hector a gift—the city of Troy. From morning to night he would fight. I am that flower.

Biron: Flower?

Dumaine: He's a pansy.

Longueville: Ha!

Armado: Shut up!

Dumaine: A daffodil?

Armado: Shut up! *(To the King)* My lord, you asked for an entertainment.

King: Yes, yes. It's fine. Continue.

Armado (To the Princess): Madam, please hear my speech.

(Biron pulls Costard aside and whispers to him.)

Princess: Yes, good Hector. You have our full attention.

Armado: I Hector, surmounted Hannibal—

Costard: Hector mounted Jaquenetta.

Armado: What!

Costard: You mounted her and now she's two months pregnant.

Armado: How dare you! Do you realize whom you are talking to? I am Don Adriano—I mean, I am Hector—of Troy!

Costard: I don't care. You'll be whipped for knocking up Jaquenetta.

Biron: That's telling him, Pompey.

Armado: This is an outrage!

Dumaine: Now he's pissed.

Biron: Hector's going to duel Pompey.

Dumaine: Yes, I should think a duel is definitely called for here—unless Hector is afraid.

Armado: By the North Pole, I challenge you!

Costard: Why should I go to the North Pole?—Where's my armour? Where's my weapons?

Dumaine: Make room, everyone.

Costard: Oh, I gave my stuff to the Princess.—Never mind, I'll just fight in my shirt.

Dumaine: Good man!

Moth (To Armado): Shall I help you out of your coat, master?

Armado: I don't have a shirt on underneath.

Moth: You're wearing Jaquenetta's dishcloth. *(To the others)* He wears it on his heart.

Holofernes (Stepping forward): This is not in the pageant. You're ruining everything. *(To the King)* My lord, I wrote the script.

King: Yes, yes. It's good.

(A messenger, Monsieur Marcade, comes in.)

Marcade: God save you, madam.

Princess: Monsieur Marcade. You have some news?

Marcade: Sadly, yes, madam. Your father, the King—

Princess: Ah.—He's dead.—Isn't he?

Marcade: Yes, madam. It's unfortunate. I share your grief.

Biron: Worthies, go home. The show's over.

(The Worthies leave.)

King: My condolences—your Majesty. *[Author's note: The King is addressing the Princess as if she were Queen, which, in effect, she is, as the heir to the throne. The Oxford edition now changes the Princess's speech prefix to "Queen." The Pelican edition, however, continues the speech prefix as "Princess." As much as I respect Oxford, I am siding with Pelican on this point.]*

Princess: Thank you.—Boyet, start making preparations. We are leaving tonight.

King: Oh, madam, please don't go.

Princess: My lord, I thank you and the other lords for your hospitality, and I ask you to forgive us if we seemed harsh with you. We didn't mean it.

King: We're certainly glad to hear that, madam.

Princess: And since the business regarding Aquitaine has been settled satisfactorily for both sides, there's no reason for my ladies and me to linger.

King: Frankly, madam, I wish we had more time—to talk about personal matters, that is.

Princess: Personal matters?

(The King looks to Biron for help.)

Biron: What the King means is that we still want to win you over, so please don't leave us hanging like this.

Princess: Your poems and letters and gifts were all very nice, but we know you were just being friendly, and perhaps humorous.

Biron: No madam. We were serious.

Dumaine: Yes.

Longueville: It should have been obvious.

(Rosaline and the Princess share a look before Rosaline answers.)

Rosaline: We're just not convinced.

Biron: If we haven't proven ourselves yet, at least stay and give us a chance.

King: In plain English, madam, the four of us want to marry the four of you.

Princess: My lord, I can't—we can't make that sort of decision all of a sudden just when we're on the point of leaving. If you want us to give you a chance, it has to be on our terms.

King: All right. I'll agree. We'll agree.

Lords: Yes. We agree.

Princess: Very well. My lord, you must leave your palace and go live in some little hut without any luxuries for a year. If you still want to marry me after that time, I'll know you're sincere and I'll accept you.

King: I'll do it. Gladly.

Dumaine: Lady Katherine, what about me?

Katherine: If the King can hold out for a year and still wants to marry the Princess—and if you still want to marry me—you can seek me out. And if I have any love in me, I'll give you some.

Dumaine: Thank you! I'll be there.

Longueville: Maria, will you have me?

Maria: If you can wait a year, I'll have you.

Longueville: It'll feel like a decade, but I'll wait.

Biron: Rosaline—sweetheart—darling—love of my life—tell me what I have to do to marry you.

Rosaline: You're such a mocker, Biron—sometimes too much. I have to put you to the test on that.

Biron: All right. What do you want me to do?

Rosaline: For the next year—and that means every day—you have to visit the sick and dying in hospitals, and you must try to cheer them up with your clever wit.

Biron: The dying? I'm supposed to cheer them up?

Rosaline: You must try. And then you'll understand that the value of a joke is to be found in the ear of the hearer, not the mouth of the speaker. If the sick and dying appreciate your wit, I will accept you as you are. If they don't, you'll change. You'll come to me as a reformed man—and I'll accept you.

Biron: Every day for a year visiting people in hospitals—I won't like it, but I'll do it.

Princess (To the King): And now my lord, we really must leave.

King: We could escort you part of the way.

Princess: No, thank you.

Biron: Forget it, my lord. This isn't going to end like a typical comedy, with people getting married.

King: In a year it will.

Biron (Indicating the audience): These people aren't going to sit and wait for a year.

(Armado comes in, bowing profusely.)

Armado (To the King): Most illustrious lord, great Colossus of the world, peerless and magnificent ruler—

King: There you are. I was wondering about you. What have you decided about Jaquenetta?

Armado: Oh.—Well, I've agreed to wait three years for her to marry me.

King: Three years? Then she's not pregnant, is she?

Armado: Certainly not, my lord.

King: Good.

Armado: My lord, the players did have another amusement to present. Just two songs. The owl and the cuckoo. I thought it up myself. I hate to see it go to waste.

King: Yes, yes. Let's hear it, whatever it is.

(Armado signals, and the Worthies return, with Nathaniel and Holofernes in normal attire.)

Armado: Master Holofernes is the cuckoo, and he will sing the song of spring. And Master Nathaniel is the owl, and he will sing the song of winter.

King: That sounds all right. You don't have summer and fall?

Armado: Em, no. This is, em, conceptual—or, em, symbolic. Anyway, I think everyone will get it.

King: All right. Carry on.

Holofernes: The Song of Spring—

(Sings)

When flowers bloom and birdies sing
In the happy months of spring,
Then young men fasten with their eyes
On pretty ladies' hips and thighs,
And nature is the reason why,
And so the cuckoo sounds his cry—
Cuckoo!—Cuckoo!
The cuckoo mocks all married men
Who wish they could be young again,
No chance for those who tied the knot,
They must be happy with their lot.
Cuckoo!—Cuckoo!—You married men,
Never to be free again.

(Holofernes bows, and everyone applauds. Then Nathaniel sings.)

Nathaniel: The Song of Winter—

(Sings)

When frozen winds blow on the land,
And labour's done by freezing hands,
Then tired men sit by the fire
And watch the hands that never tire,
Dear wife is cooking for the sire,
Which wise old owl must admire.
Whoo-whoohoo! he says, Whoo-whoohoo!—
Who is the sad one now,
Who never cared to make a vow,
Who ages and must go through life
Without the comforts of a wife?

Whoo-whooh!—Whoo-whooh!—
 What will the winter do for you?
 Husbands have hearths and links of gold,
 While bachelors are freezing in the cold.

(Nathaniel bows, and everyone applauds, somewhat more loudly.)

Armado: To marry, or not to marry. Shall we be owls or cuckoos?

King: We were cuckoos, but we'll transform into owls.

Princess: Come and see us in a year, and we'll see what there is to see.—Come, ladies.—Come, Boyet.
 We go our way, and they go theirs.

Armado (To the audience): And you go yours, through the marked exit doors. And whether you find
 wind or rain, heat or frost, may the labour of your love never be lost.

(All leave.)

END

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